

**COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE- 82
COMBINED PRESS INFORMATION CENTER
BAGRAM AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09354**

Press Center: 0799-063-013
bagrammoc@afghan.swa.army.mil

**October 3, 2007
RELEASE # 009**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Signs of home: Deployed service members find comfort, laughter
from billboard**

*By Tech. Sgt. April Lapetoda
Combined Joint Task Force-82 Public Affairs Office*

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Aside from the beautiful scenery of luscious green fields and never-ending blue skies, those on a road trip across the southern stretch of South Dakota don't have much else to see.

Except for the countless signs leading to Wall Drug, which beckon to tourists.

Many of the handmade signs read "5¢ coffee" or "free ice water" and they can be found every few miles.

Those from South Dakota may have become complacent to the signs, but one which reads "6,964 miles to Wall Drug..." is sure to grab anyone's attention, as was the case for one Airman from Pierre, S.D., who has been deployed to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, for the past five months.

Airman 1st Class Kyrissa M. Sandal, Combined Joint Task Force-82 Civil Military Operations data developer and Webmaster, recently discovered the sign while driving by with a friend.

Sandal said when she saw the sign she felt, "Ecstatic... Just seeing the sign that leads back to home was comforting."

She revisited the sign Tuesday to take some pictures of, and with, the sign.

"I've never seen a Wall Drug sign outside the U.S. before," Sandal, who has been in the Air Force for just over a year, said.

The sign is made on a piece of plywood attached to a metal pole and sits sandwiched between two sandbag walls, in front of two bunkers.

Wall Drug is a drug store and gift shop located in Wall, S.D., and their signs can not only be found across South Dakota, but around the world. Because of their creative marketing technique, Wall Drug has become a popular tourist stop.

Similarly, the lone sign here has become a picture opportunity for servicemembers.

Generally, people can be seen taking pictures with the sign about once a week, said Army Staff Sgt. Thomas A. Wanzek, 235th Military Police Company motor sergeant. Usually, passer-bys get a laugh at it.

While taking pictures of the sign, Sandal ran into a few members of the 235th MP Co., which is an Army National Guard unit out of Rapid City, S.D.

They chatted for a few minutes about things back home.

“It was very nice,” said Sandal. “I don’t meet many people in the military from South Dakota.”

Specialist Jason Crowson, a supply vehicle clerk in the 235th MP Co., decided to make the sign about six months ago.

“My family was curious about how far my hometown was from here, so I figured it would be easier to go from Wall Drug, which is about 50 miles away from them,” said Crowson, who hails from Rapid City, S.D.

The mileage was configured using Google Earth, going over the North Pole, he said.

A picture of the Wall Drug sign here was sent to the store, said Crowson.

“They said thanks for the picture and that they’d post it somewhere.”

Even while driving in Afghanistan, a servicemember never knows when they’ll see a sign, which will remind them of the road to home.

-30-

Photo Captions:

0701002-F-D2824-001 - Airman 1st Class Kyrissa M. Sandal, Combined Joint Task Force-82 Civil Military Operations data developer and Webmaster, stands next to the Wall Drug sign located on a roadside at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Sandal is originally from Pierre, S.D. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Dilia DeGrego)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/0701002-F-D2824-001.JPG>

0701002-F-L5044-002 - Specialist Jason Crowson, a supply vehicle clerk in the 235th Military Police Company, stands next to the Wall Drug sign he made about six months ago, which is located on a roadside at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. April Lapetoda)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/0701002-F-L5044-002.JPG>

0701002-F-L5044-003 – A sign giving the mileage to Wall Drug, which is a drug store and gift shop located in Wall, S.D., stands between to sandbag walls in Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. April Lapetoda)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/0701002-F-L5044-003.JPG>

#

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CJTF-82 Public Affairs Office Tel – 0093-799-063-013, DSN: 318-431-7852, bagrammoc@afghan.swa.army.mil, or Maj. Orson Ward at (605) 737-6721, cell (605) 431-8753.

For more news and information about CJTF-82, please visit www.cjtf82.com

For more news and information about NATO's International Security Assistance Force - Afghanistan, please visit www.nato.int/isaf/